



THE VOTER LWV

*The official newsletter
of the League of Women
Voters North Pinellas*

<https://my.lwv.org/florida/north-pinellas-county> lwvnpc.info@gmail.com

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March/April 2023

Annual Meeting and Luncheon, April 1, 2023



David Jolly, attorney, former congressman, lobbyist, speaker, author and political commentator gave the main address at the LWVNPC Annual meeting and luncheon on April 1 at Trinity Presbyterian Church, Clearwater. During a well-received presentation, he recognized the obstacles facing the LWV and other organizations committed to protecting democracy and empowering voters. He spoke of deliberate voter suppression efforts occurring in state legislatures across the country, the marginalization of already marginalized populations, and the attack on the media. He touched on gun violence, and that expecting our children to be safe at school is no longer a given. Yet he also pointed to the elections of 2018 and 2022, with the majority of the country rejecting the direction of the previous years and signaling a return to respecting our election process and saving democracy. He also addressed a question regarding the current political climate in Florida, which performed differently than the rest of the country.

Despite the improved horizon, there is much work to be done. Mr. Jolly called for fundamental election reform. Most importantly, Jolly spoke of voters putting aside strict adherence to party platforms, and instead forming coalitions that share values such as: protecting democracy, creating a superior education

system, making health care affordable and accessible, and creating policies that give all people equity and self-worth. Mr. Jolly ended with a salute to the LWV, saying that he was happy to speak at the LWWNPC luncheon, because "I stand in gratitude for the work you do."

Welcome LWWNPC Board Members 2023-2024



Jacqueline Farrell, Tanya Landry, Camilla DeLoreto, Vivian Posey, Gayla Larson, Carol Bailey, Linda Metzkwow, Mina Harkins and Karen Karinja



President Marti Folwell, David Jolly and Carol Bailey

Thirty-seven voting members were present at the annual meeting luncheon, and former president Karen Karinja presided over the installation of Officers and Directors for the 2023-2024 year where all were sworn in.

Officers of the Board of Directors for 2023-2024 are as follows:

President: Marti Folwell (through 2024)
Secretary Gayla Larson (thru 2024)
VP Membership (co-chair) Tanya Landry
VP Membership (co-chair) Jacqueline Farrell

Elected Members of the Board for 2023-2025

Vivian Posey
Mina Harkins
Linda Metzkow

2023-2024 Nominating Committee

Carol Bailey, Chair
Barbara Letvin, Committee Member

From Our President: Marti's Musings



I recently experienced a display of projects by eighth grade students at a Pinellas County public school with an International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme (MYP). There were hundreds of folding display boards on such topics as recycling, homelessness, lack of clothing, hunger, cleaning up the polluted oceans, and dealing with intellectual disabilities.

According to the coordinator, "The IB MYP helps students build empathy for others and learn how to use skills to make the world a better place,"

The school website explains "The IB MYP is for all students in grades 6-8. The aim of the IB MYP is to develop internationally minded people who, recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet, help to create a better and more peaceful world. Students are encouraged to examine their world from all angles, giving students the skills to look at issues from a local, national, and global perspective. The IB MYP strives to help all students intentionally develop the ten IB Learner Profile attributes to become Inquirers, Knowledgeable, Thinkers, Communicators, Principled, Open-Minded, Caring, Risk-Takers, Balanced, and Reflective."

This experience for me was a glimpse of some of the hopeful things happening in the sometimes-weird world of today.

Martha (Marti) Folwell, President, LWVNPC



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Earth Day 2023

An Actor, an Economist,
and The Answer to
Everything | NYT Opinion

Sir Partha Dasgupta is a renowned economist at Cambridge University who was commissioned by the British government to solve their environmental crisis. His result: a six-hundred-page report! In this funny, irreverent, and short video, actor Alexander Skarsgård breaks it

all down into one basic answer. Watch it here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ggo07G1XB6A>



The LWVNPC continues to collect petitions in support of getting the Right to Clean Water initiative on the 2024 ballot. Despite having a comprehensive body of state environmental laws and regulations, the condition of Florida waters continues to decline. If the measure to amend the state constitution passes, *“it creates a fundamental right to clean and healthy waters, clarifies prohibited actions and inactions that harm (or threaten to harm) waters, and defines important terms. It*

also allows Floridians to enforce this right through the ability to sue state executive agencies that violate this right.” This grassroots movement needs 900,000 petition signatures by November 2023 to get on the 2024 ballot. Please continue to educate yourself on this amendment and encourage others to sign the petition. Petitions must be signed manually and mailed, but each envelope may contain up to five petitions.

For more information go to <https://www.floridarighttocleanwater.org/>

Barbara Letvin and Jacqueline Farrell



Signing Petitions at East Lake Library



Barbara Letvin, Jacqueline Farrell, Chris Taylor, and Cathy Protopapas spent Earth Day gathering signatures for the Clean Water petition at local libraries and fairs. They obtained a total of 69 signatures. Chris Taylor continues to be the *Rock Star*, obtaining 90 signatures just by talking to everyone she meets about the amendment and asking for their support. Congratulations, Chris!



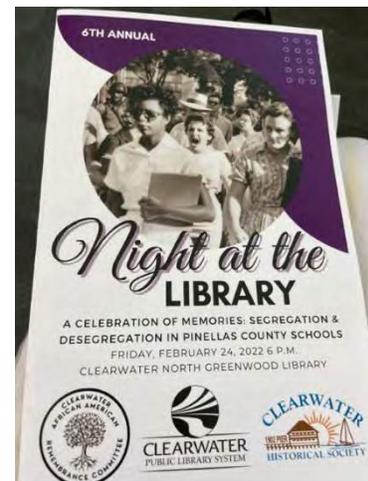
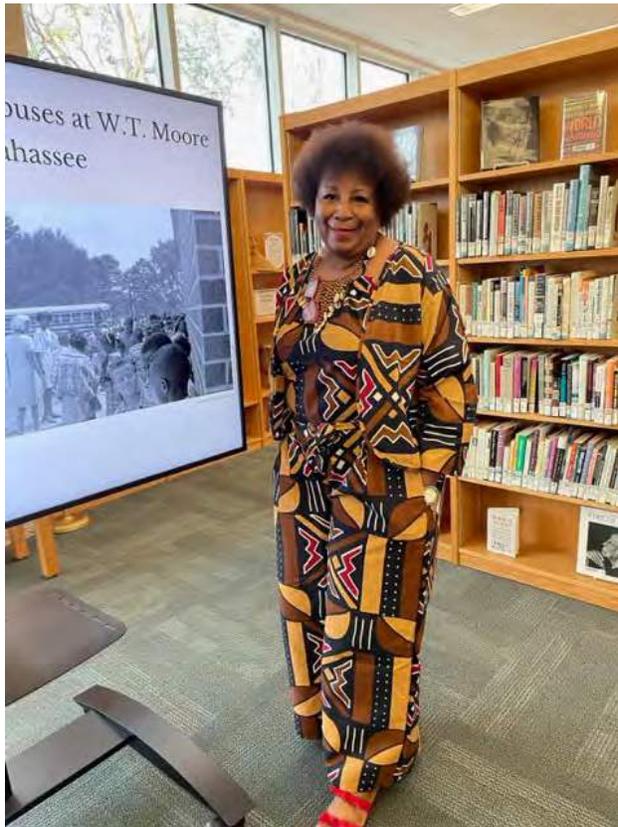
LWVNP is looking for leadership and/or membership for the Natural Resources committee, which is currently unstaffed. Do you have an interest in the environment, clean water and air, energy conservation, or preserving the planet? This may be an opportunity for you to delve further into an issue of your choice. You will have discretion as to what areas and projects you wish to explore. Assistance is available, and you can work as your time and schedule permit, with the exception of Board

meetings which meet monthly via Zoom.

For more information, contact Marti Folwell mhfolwell@verizon.net.

More LWVNPC Members in Action

Night at the Library, February 24, 2023



Tanya Landry attended this event, hosted by the Clearwater Public Library System, Clearwater African American Remembrance Committee and the Clearwater Historical Society. Called *A Celebration of Memories-Segregation and Desegregation, Then and Now*, it featured special presentations by Kevin Hendrick, Pinellas County Schools Superintendent; Joyce Russell, Business and Professional Woman of the Year; Edward Baldwin, Retired Administrator, Pinellas County Schools, with performances by Charmain Cmaine Jennings and the Mt. Zion United Methodist Church Praise to Sing Team.

LWVNPC Goes to Pinellas History Day!



Kyiana Buford and her teacher at Boca Ciega High School, Amanda Dogu. Kyiana won first place with her High School Individual Exhibit.

Her Topic: *Changing Minds: 19th Century Women at the Frontier of Mental Health Reform.*

If you ever need to know more about the Maginot Line, how smallpox was eradicated in the US, or how Betty Crocker changed the way we eat today, you can find out at the annual Pinellas History Day competition. This year, the competition was held at Largo High School on February 24-25, and the theme was "Frontiers in History." Students from Pinellas County middle and high schools, whose projects were winners at the school level, competed for the right to move to state and national competition. Project categories included exhibits, documentary films, websites, performances, and research papers.

Judges for this competition are community volunteers, teachers, AND members of the LWV! This year, LWVNPC members Tanya Landry and Vivian Posey served as judges during this prestigious 2-day competition. Both of these judges were impressed with the quality of the projects, the scholarship and creativity of the students, and the overall organization of the event.

Plan now to join the judging team for History Day, 2024! Judges are always needed, and you don't have to be a history expert. The only qualification is an interest in helping students achieve their academic best!

Submitted by Vivian Posey

FAST: (Faith and Action, Strength Together), Nehemiah Action Assembly, March 29, 2023

Faith and Action for Strength Together, better known as FAST, is a faith-based group consisting of more than 50 congregations across different religions and denominations. The Nehemiah Action Assembly is an annual event where members gather to call for action from Pinellas County officials. This year, LWVNPC member and Clearwater Vice Mayor Kathleen Beckman responded to the water quality issues and Eliseo Santana and LWVSPA member Pat Fling presented as part of the Affordable Housing committee.



Kathleen Beckman



Eliseo Santana , Pat Fling

League President Marti Folwell interviewed by *the Bellair Bee*:

League of Women Voters Sides with Democracy.

Read an excerpt below and the entire article at

https://www.tbnweekly.com/eedition/page_5f0cc5d4-9bfd-5a63-acc9-914abb744ee7.html

Marti Folwell first became involved with the North Pinellas League of Women Voters more than 50 years ago. A neighbor encouraged her to come to a meeting, and babysitting was provided, so she decided to give it a try. "I met a lot of really interesting and well-educated people," she said. "So, I decided to join." Today she is still a member and is serving her third term as president of the organization. The League is a political grassroots network and membership organization that believes the freedom to vote is a nonpartisan issue. The North Pinellas group has over 100 members who work to expand voter access, influence public policy, educate both the public and legislators on issues of importance, and defend democracy. "It's a great opportunity for people to use their brains and advocate for issues that are of importance to them," Folwell said. Through different committees, members attend school board and other government meetings; travel to Tallahassee to educate and advocate on statewide issues of importance to the group; educate local citizens on public policy issues; hold candidate forums around elections; and work to encourage teenagers and others to register to vote and to participate in the voting process. Some current issues being supported by the League include protecting the environment, protesting against limiting what can be taught in history classes in public schools and fighting for fairness in voter redistricting.

Membership Orientation March 6, 2023

Seven new members attended. After introductions and an icebreaker that let us all get to know something new about each other, we watched a fantastic *PowerPoint* presentation illustrating League history and activities. Thanks to Gayla Larson who developed this tool and to the new members who accepted the invitation: Niki Amarantides, Art Borst, Phoebe Tave, Amanda Ortscheid, Kathleen Beckman, Debbie Etreken, Kay Shapiro and Stacy Loper.



New Members

Niki Amarantides
Art Borst
Elizabeth Burlew
Edie Darling
Cecilia Gutierrez
Kinnan Johnston
Lela Kelly
Juliet Lewis
Penny Taub
Kim Thomas

COMMITTEE UPDATES

Board Meeting - members welcome!



The LWVNP Board meets the 1st Wednesday of each month at 4:00pm. Minutes for the March 2023 meeting can be found at:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1YftuTISboc1sQk_2BVvU4CDTkM2W_GWY/view?usp=sharing

Please join us for any upcoming Board meeting to learn how you can participate more fully. Contact Gayla Larson (nblarson@gmail.com) to obtain the link to join these informative and busy meetings.

Economic Equity Committee



The current focus has been on the state's legislative session, with a number of proposed bills focusing on reproductive rights, gender-affirming care and school curriculum addressing sex education, diversity, equity and inclusion.

The Heartbeat Bill, as it is called, has passed and will go into effect unless the Florida Supreme Court decides

on a challenge that the current 15-week abortion law is a violation of the Florida Constitution's guarantee of the right to privacy. South Carolina's Supreme Court did strike down a similar law for that reason. That state would become the closest state to which a Florida woman could travel to for a legal abortion after 6 weeks. The proposed law also provides \$25 million in taxpayer money to the Florida Pregnancy Care Network, which pushes alternatives to abortion. While the law adds some exceptions such as rape, incest and human trafficking, there must be documentation as evidence, creating additional hurdles for a woman and her physician. The court ruling is expected by summer.

Additionally, access to the abortion medication, Mifepristone, is being restricted to prescribing only through an in-person visit to a physician. We are awaiting impending action this week from the Federal Supreme Court on the recent federal judge in Texas ruling that the FDA-approved drug be taken off the market completely.

One positive bill moving ahead, the Learning With Dignity Act, makes menstrual products available to students in public school at no cost to students.

What is known as the Don't Say Gay bill has been amended to include a broader provision stretching to the 8th grade, and allowing schools to disregard students' choice of pronouns, even with parental support. Also, expect more legislation on gender-affirming care, sex education, coursework in schools, and control of faculty hiring.

The committee will begin planning for a hot topic on affordable housing in the county in June. Anyone interested in the issues around renter's rights, access and availability of affordable housing is encouraged to contact the committee at mharkins@QIS.net.

Education Committee



The Education Committee met virtually on Monday, March 27 th at 4:30 pm and welcomed new League member, Debbie Entreken.

Update on My Vote Counts Project: Vivian presented Part I of the My Vote Counts presentation during a virtual mentoring session for Take Stock in Children on Tuesday, April 11 th. There were 48 high school students in attendance. Part II will be presented on Tuesday, May 2nd. The Education Committee has been invited to participate in the virtual mentoring sessions again during the 2023-24 school year.

Unfortunately, district policy precludes our voter presentation to career and technical schools in Pinellas County. No outside groups are permitted to do voter registration.

Pinellas District School Board: Jeanne Reynolds has attended several Board meetings as a representative of the League. Vivian attended the April 11th meeting and found the sign-in process to be smooth. She was announced at the opening of the meeting as representing a community organization. The next School Board meeting is set for Tuesday, April 25, at 5:00 pm. Any member of the League is invited to attend as a representative of the League and a supporter of public schools.

Education Committee Hot Topic: "Why Public School is the BEST Choice": In response to the recent passage of HB1/SB202 (School Choice) that establishes a universal voucher program for all students who wish to attend a private school in Florida, the Education Committee has planned a virtual Hot Topic titled, "Why Public School is the BEST Choice." The date of this event is Wednesday, April 26 th (5:00 pm). Key information to be presented during this event includes the history of the School Choice movement in Florida, as it relates to public, charter, and private schools; the three parallel systems of

education that exist in Florida at this time; the fiscal impact on traditional public schools as a result of the proposed system of universal vouchers; and a description of some of the 80+ programs that are offered for Pinellas County students in grades K-12 in traditional public schools. Invited speakers include Dr. Sally Butzin, (LWV member and author of the Investigate Report on Step Up for Students); Caprice Edmond, Pinellas School Board Member; and Ellen Truskowski, Pinellas Director of the Student Assignment Office. The registration flyers are being sent this week to members of both Pinellas County Leagues, and other community and parent groups. Registration is required. <https://forms.gle/wckWYPLNx4N5d9vk8>



Exciting News! Voter Services has a new chairperson! Linda Metzkow, a new Board member, will be leading this committee. Linda has a professional background that will undoubtedly make her a great chair. For more than 20 years she assisted individuals applying for Social Security disability where she implemented case strategy, developed evidence, and presented clients' cases before the administrative law judges. She is currently serving on the Inspire Equine Assisted Center Board of Directors located in Clearwater.

Watch for future Voter Service Opportunities.

Want to Help Register Voters?

It's an important time for League members. If you wish to become more involved, why not become League-certified to facilitate voter registration, VBM, and getting out the vote? One has to pass an 18-question quiz to become certified.

Go to <https://lwvfl.org/>. Scroll down the page to a box that looks like this: Click on the League Management box to enter a page that has lots of boxes including the Register Voters box. Clicking once on the box will take you to a page requiring a password. Contact a member of the board for authentication details, or email lwvnpc.info@gmail.com.

Once the password is entered, you can read the 3 pages of training material and take the quiz repeatedly if necessary to score 100 percent on the quiz.

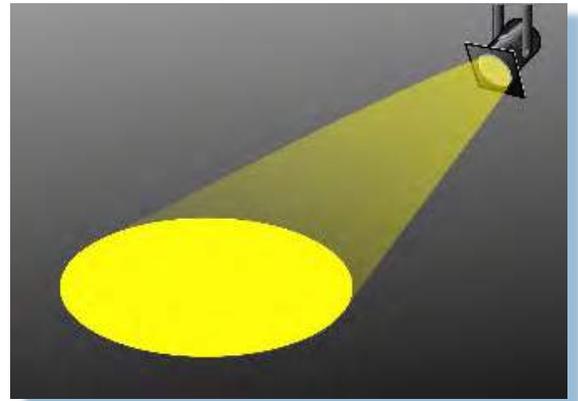
Then you are good to register voters with a certified partner under the League auspices for the next year.

See you at Voter Services soon!

Spotlight: Introducing Karen Owen



If the LWNPC had a wizard, it would be Karen Owen. Karen is “conversant” in computers, website and social media management, audio-visual equipment, graphic design, and was the first one to arrange live streaming via Facebook of a



hot topic. She also does a lot of speaking and writing for the League, but perhaps her greatest attribute is her passion for the League’s mission.

To her, the LWV stands for democracy for all, not just the wealthy and well connected, and the right to vote is paramount. She has served as second Vice President and as a board member for the last two years. Karen reports that working with the League has given her confidence, leadership and advocacy skills, and the ability to navigate statutes and legislation. As Karen says: “Being part of the League of Women Voters, this trusted organization, has been so valuable to me and I hope to be a member forever.”

Karen moved to Florida from Northern Virginia in 2015 and joined the LWNPC in 2016. In her own words, she was shocked at the difficulty in registering to vote in the State of Florida. She quickly became involved in the Amendment 4 campaign, which allowed ex-offenders to vote if all their associated fines have been paid. She joined PERC, the Pinellas Ex-Offender Reentry Coalition and began to teach classes about voting rights, voting eligibility and voter registration to marginalized populations. She also expanded her work in advocating for voting rights to high school students, and by going into alternative high schools to bring voting information and civics instruction to students who will be eligible to vote at age 18. She has encouraged students to pre-register to vote at 16 but has been dismayed by the lack of follow-up by the SOE in tracking these preregistrations. She found that a similar situation exists at the Division of Motor Vehicles, because there are no protections that guarantee voter registrations taken there are processed.

In 2021, Karen served on the Pinellas County Redistricting Commission, which was responsible for drawing voter district maps for the county. Karen, who has a PhD in Geographic Information Systems, was the only one on the committee who had experience in digital mapping, which includes cross-referencing maps with census data. As part of the committee, she was able to make a vital correction, when a boundary change was recommended that would have excluded a sitting commissioner from running for re-election in her own district.

When not working for her church and her community, Karen has discovered a new “later in life” passion: playing the saxophone. She is delighted that she has learned to read music and now plays with the Pinellas Community Band. Another new joy is her two-and-a-half-year-old grandson, who spends time with her each week. And as you can see from her picture...this Grandma has style!

Reflections

Beth Hovind recently embarked on a five day “Civil Rights Tour” which began and ended in Atlanta but wove through Georgia and Alabama and explored historic settings of the Civil Rights Movement of the 20th century. It is a diary that will educate and broaden our sensitivity to the racial struggles of Black Americans. It will be featured in installments in each issue. To read the entire article, go to



https://docs.google.com/document/d/1eDcxbeWaVkk9SSQBYnkFJT7HZBQFLXIY/edit?usp=share_link&oid=108244004780883687512&rtpof=true&sd=true

Tuesday, January 10, 2023:

The day is here. We have been planning this for several months, actually for three years. First it was just a musing of five aging women joined together across the country in an amazing race book club. We were studying the why's and how's of the racial history of our country, searching for ways we could join in the current struggle for racial justice. Originally larger, we ended up being a group of 5 white women.

Landing in Atlanta, we quickly found our rental car. Our first stop is Centennial (1996) Olympic Park home of the Georgia Aquarium, World of Coca-Cola Exhibit and the Civil Rights and Human Rights Museum, which is our destination. We later learn that the head of Coca-Cola was instrumental in bringing the Atlanta community, white and Black, together to celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's Nobel Peace Prize. When whites had decided not to attend the ceremony, his persistence brought the communities together.

The Civil Rights and Human Rights Museum is emotionally difficult to view. We found this in many of the sites we were to visit. Our racial history tears at the heart when witnessing the death and destruction of many in Black America and the hatred expressed by the whites. This history begins with a series of multi-photos on two facing walls with pictures from Black history in the 60's and counter poses pictures of whites from the same time period. Through photos, videos and writings we are taken through the turbulent 60's, the freedom riders, Martin Luther King, Jr. and his organization as well as the myriad of groups and individuals fighting for civil rights. It was very impactful but difficult to see how horrible humans can be to fellow humans. An experiential mock lunch counter where we sit with headphones listening to the hatred being spewed by angry whites behind us is so frightening. In all, an amazing exhibit, and though the outcome is positive in the end, the suffering that Blacks (and their supporters) in this country survived is incomprehensible. And we are still not a free country for many. *(To be continued....)*



JOIN US FOR...

WHY PUBLIC SCHOOL IS THE BEST CHOICE!

WED. APRIL 26TH
5:00 PM

REGISTER HERE FOR THIS LIVE VIRTUAL EVENT

FEATURED SPEAKERS

- Dr. Sally Butzin, Author, Educator
- Caprice Edmond, Pinellas School Board Member
- Ellen Truskowski, Director, PCSB Office of Student Assignment

DISCUSSION TOPICS

- Learn about **Universal School Vouchers** and the financial impact of this legislation on our public schools.
- Find out how **public tax dollars** are being diverted to private, unregulated schools.
- Discover the many unique opportunities for ALL students in the **Pinellas County School District**.



What are Universal School Vouchers and why were they approved by the Florida Legislature and signed into law recently? How will these vouchers impact public schools in Pinellas County? What do parents and taxpayers need to know about this change to the way that schools in Florida are funded? If you want answers to these and other questions about School Choice and public K-12 schools in Florida, and especially in Pinellas County, you won't want to miss this zoom event on Wed. April 26th!

Be sure to register for this event soon! <https://forms.gle/wckWYPLNx4N5d9vk8>



LWVNPC Membership Coffee Hour

When: Wednesday, May 17, 2023
Time: 10 AM
Where: Starbucks
The Shoppes at Harbour Pointe
100 Main St.
Safety Harbor, FL 34689
727-726-4542

Are you interested in the League?

Are you a new Member?

Are you a former member and want to meet new people?

Come join us for a morning beverage. Coffee is on us!

RSVP to

jacquelinefarrell20@gmail.com

or

tlandry@conquestsystems.com

best-clipart.com

DATES TO REMEMBER

Monday, April 24, 2023
Wednesday, April 26, 2023

Wednesday, May 3, 2023
Wednesday, May 17, 2023

Friday, June 2-June 4, 2023

Education Committee Meeting 4:30 via Zoom
Education Hot Topic: Why Public School is the Best Choice: 5 PM via Zoom
May Board Meeting -4:00 - 5:30 via Zoom
Membership Coffee Hour, Starbucks, Safety Harbor 10 AM
LWVFL State Convention, Orlando, FL